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Handel and his "Messiah."

AN OLD LECTURE. BY J. S. DWIGHT.

Handel, like most of the great composers, was a prodigy in his boyhood. But in him it was not, as in so many cases of precocity, a premature development, a budding out before the spring had fairly come. In him everything came in the fulness of time. His was healthy genius; it could bear the cold. He had always something in reserve; the flower did not exhaust the plant. The brilliant manifestations of the boy were a preparation, as well as a promise, of more. It was a life destined to be a long one, and to complete itself on as grand a scale as it began.

We have not room to review the incidents of his history; but we will remark on the character of the man, as it presents itself at different periods of his life, and show how completely the man and his music were one. This will bring new interest to the examination into which we are about to enter of his glorious Oratorio.

First, look back over his childhood and youth, from the time when he had completed his severe German education, had sunned himself in Italy, and there initiated himself into the popular business of Operas, and was now ripe for his great career in England; that is, from about the year 1710. Even then he is the Handel that his music since declared him. A decided march towards the one thing needful, the thing he was made for, marks him from an infant. He seized

upon and appropriated just the food his genius craved, precisely in the fulness of time, and as one having authority. That child, or that child's instinct, always knew what he was about;—no dallying, no wavering, no misgiving. What a healthy strength was his! How well he kept his balance! How, without hurry, or complaining, he made known his wish just at the time when he could realize it! There was no romance about him; nothing morbid or excessive. Those occasional bursts of anger were only quick electric explosions of a body highly charged, and essential to continued calm weather. For in him generosity went with independence; he could afford to fly into a passion with his neighbor; for there was nothing in him which it was necessary to hide under a smooth exterior. There was not an hour of sickly sentimentality through the whole April and May of his youth. What sorrows and inward struggles he may have had we know not, for he was not of a nature to tell of those things. He was the antipodes to the self-accusing Rousseaus, and he would not have known how to write "Confessions." Evidently he had no leisure to complain of fortune—the earnest, struggling youth! For him the voluntary pains of hard but wholesome toil drowned the sense of other pains. He was therefore a child whom Art had chosen and set apart. He walked in his own sphere, which was one of light, led by the hand of Nature. Almost it seems as if he were not subject to the infirmity, *par excellence*, which we call humanity. This we commonly deem a defect, because we want a person who gives and craves sympathy. Strong attachment, or rather, weak attachment to persons and places, he certainly never showed. He was no tender, blushing, moist-eyed boy, like Mozart, asking everybody to love him. There is not a single love-passage recorded in his whole life; not any tell-tale breaks in the solid continuity of his works, any trembling in the bold handwriting, to lead us to suspect the presence of such secret disturbing force, from beginning to end of his whole career. A poor hero he would make in a modern novel. Was this coldness? or was it that perfect temperature in which one never asks how cold, or how warm? For, be it remembered, he was generous, and kind, and just; altogether above envy; and he never betrayed a trace of meanness. And if this is not enough, wait and see what he was reserved for; hear the perpetual voice which he has lent to the heart's deepest faith and love, in those songs of the "Messiah;" and consider whether it may not be that he was marked from the first for one of Nature's holy priesthood, to keep himself above all personal and private interests and feelings, and be an interpreter and voice to the deep and universal experience of all souls, keeping alive the consciousness of a life beyond time.

Having accompanied him thus far in the world (which to him was the world of Art), let us look around with him, and try to understand his position in that world. What was the state of music then? What the schools in which he was formed? And what had he to build upon?

The music of that day may be comprehended under three great classes: 1. The learned, or Organ style; 2. The Italian and French Operatic style; and 3. The Protestant Church style, the popular Hymn or Choral.

1. The first prevailed in Germany, and had, until within a century, prevailed in Italy. Until that time, music, as a science, had been shut up with the monks in cloisters, like every kind of knowledge; and consisted mainly in artificial combinations of harmony, with comparatively small regard to melody. For long centuries the monotonous "plain chant," or *canto fermo* of the first Christian Churches, improved into the "Gregorian Chant," and sung in unison or octaves, without any harmony, was the only recognized form of music. How harmony, or the concord of several parts, was introduced, of course can never be matter of very definite history. The discovery must have been gradual. Probably, however, the organists, (for the organ was common from the twelfth century), were the first to discover its beauty. Accompanying the chant in the churches, they would naturally be tempted to deviate from the air into other notes which chimed in pleasantly; and having all the elements of harmony spread out on the key-board under their hands, like the colors on a painter's palette, they would be led on by the excitement of one newly discovered combination to another, (indeed a child, wandering over the keys of a piano, discovers harmony for himself in the same way now), till they had attained to all the fulness of Counterpoint, (music in parts corresponding note for note) and to all the labyrinthine windings of the Fugue. This is substantially Hogarth's account of it. This last became the proper organ style. It originated, so accounts say, in the antiphonal singing, or the responses of two or more choirs singing the old chant. "A certain phrase of the melody, after having been sung by one portion of the choristers, is echoed by the others, at certain distances, and at a higher or lower pitch; and the successive accumulation of these different masses of sound into one grand and harmonious whole, produces the greatest effects of which music is capable." Once discovered, these curious applications of the laws of harmony bewitched all composers. Nothing was artificial and elaborate enough; a natural effect, perhaps, of the monkish confinement of an art which is properly the child of Nature. The music of these school-men was as ingenious and barren as their philosophy.

But is this the whole account of it? O, no. With all the coldness and artificiality into which it degenerated in Germany, some time before Handel, the Fugue is too beautiful in itself, too inexhaustible in its suggestions, to pass for a mere musical puzzle or acrostic. Mere ingenuity could not exercise such lasting, universal sway. The Fugue was rooted in the heart and genius of the middle ages. No one admires Gothic architecture for its mere skill; it is felt to be full of beauty and spiritual significance. So the genius of the Fugue is essentially Gothic. It grows and kindles,

and goes circling upwards, like a many-tongued flame, always aspiring, never finished, telling of more and more that it would be. Moreover, it is impersonal and universal in its sentiment. There is not one prominent air or voice in it, and the rest subordinate; but innumerable voices and airs winding and blending into one another, and leading you into the depths and mysterious mazes of a vast animated whole, like this world of ours. It is the type of the Finite losing itself in the Infinite. Such is the nobler aspect of the Fugue; the natural language of the deep, religious, mystical, and Gothic sentiment of those times.

It was into this style that the young Handel was first initiated. It was in this high mystic organ-music, that the soul of the future composer of the "Messiah" unfolded its wings, and learned to soar above this smoky element of limitation, difference, and partial interests. At the same time, even admitting that there was little of saving life in the then German composers in that style, so that their works are forgotten, yet what a school for the future artist! To compose a Fugue, however mechanically, compelled the mind to think, to re-produce great nature's law of unity in variety. It was called the *strict style*. It compelled one to stick to his text; it was the *logic* of music. It would not do to string together passages, wandering wherever fancy led. The composer chose a theme, and then developed it, unravelled the seemingly simple knot into an endless sequence of admirable inferences, traversing a vast variety, yet always bringing you safely home to the theme. This is something like the insight by which a philosopher deduces the whole of Nature from the sight of one plant or stone. The artist, trained in such manly exercise, would be in little danger of composing superficially, if there were any material in him. How like the germ of an oak, in spring warmth, would every little spontaneous melody open out in his hands into a whole melodious vegetation! Handel laid a broad foundation in this thorough school of harmony. All that there was good in it he made his own; and if he also contracted what was bad in it, if he cultivated harmony at the expense of melody, he was soon in a way to remedy that.

2. The Italian Opera was his next school. In the Opera resulted the effort of music to escape the fantastic fetters of science and the tedium of the church, and to get back to nature. Popular melodies sprang up like wild flowers in the low places and by-paths of life. They were an unwritten music. The ecclesiastical composer did not recognize them. But towards the beginning of the seventeenth century they began to attract the attention of persons who had taste and feeling. As to the old church music, its original melody and subject matter had now become so stationary and lifeless, (all invention being bestowed on curious ways of harmonizing it), that it needed replenishment from the genuine sources, the careless natural melodies of the heart. The popular airs were gathered up, and written out, and harmonized. And Recitative, or singing speech, which had the double charm, (1) of natural expressiveness (its rhythm and melody irregularly varying with the sentiment), and (2) of being supposed to be the very same idealized and exalted language in which the old Greek dramas were recited, came into notice about this time, and was the principal feature of the first opera, performed in 1600. Between this date and the time of Handel, operas had run away with nearly all the musical feeling of Italy. Meanwhile, too, the powers of the violin had been somewhat developed; for then Corelli lived. And wherever the violin is practised, the taste for free and graceful melody necessarily follows.

From the deep ecclesiastical studies of Germany, then, (varied only with so much of secular music as the oboe and some few wind instruments furnished), Handel went to the world's great conservatory of natural melody and pathos, the Opera of Italy; from learning how to handle every theme with masterly power, to the enriching his mind with new themes; from delving amid the laws and exploring the thorough-bass of Nature, to listening and answering to her poetry. Strength and grace, now, alike were his. He

had laid a solid rock-foundation; but it was over-spread with a rich and generous soil, in which all the sweetest flowers sprang quickly up.

3. There was yet a third, a middle style, between the learned church style and the natural and almost licentious secular music: and on this Handel, though perhaps unconsciously, stood by force of his whole inborn character and genius. I mean the Lutheran Protestant "Choral;" the popular sacred music; the insurrection of nature against science in the church, as the Opera was nature setting up for herself out of the church. This was the simplest, though the gravest of all music. It did not discourse of the personal and temporary, like songs and operas, but gave utterance to the universal religious sentiment. It allowed the whole congregation to sing, in solemn, long-drawn notes; all in unison, without any harmony; and yet the vast uprolling cloud of sound, swelled by such a mass of voices, saluting the ear from different distances, and swallowing up its own echoes and reflections, did affect the ear like harmony,—just as the cloud taking the sun at different angles exhibits all the colors of the rainbow. A Handel, listening to this mighty volume of sound, would scarcely help hearing tenor, and alto, and bass, and even imagining florid interwoven melodies playing spontaneous accompaniment, and fugues in endless chase traversing the whole mass.

Handel's genius was essentially popular. He stood on the middle Protestant ground of popular feeling. He did not confine himself, of course, to the simple form of the "Choral;" but on the basis of its simple spirit he built his art, borrowing, on either side, from the profoundly learned, mystical music of the Cathedral, and from the inventive fire of the secular opera. To the music of the popular religious sentiment he gave the endless metaphysical unfoldings of science, and the grace and unconstraint of nature. Thus he reconciled religion, science, native impulse, all, in his art; and produced a music which is a prophetic language, a language of that innate faith in every mind which is deeper than all our moods and opinions, the faith, namely, that all shall be reconciled; that there shall be no secular, no sacred, but all good, each finding its joy in all. But this is anticipating. Handel did not enter this peculiar province which Heaven had assigned him, until he had studied long in the schools we have described; no, not until he had toiled much longer, in a false position, trying to succeed in a sphere too small for him. I mean his long opera drudgery in England.

His life in England before he composed the "Messiah" was one long thirty years of gigantic, unremitted toil; during which time he produced about forty operas, several oratorios, and other music without end. He reigned absolute monarch in England's music during half that time, and then he let no opposition drive him from the ground; it was the ground itself sank under him. It was Providence itself letting him down upon the solid rock foundation, where he might work with all his own true strength. Of his splendid triumphs there as opera conductor and composer, we cannot speak. Like every popular favorite he had his day of reverses. His lofty spirit could not conform to the caprices and ambitious tastes of the singers whom he had to manage, and whose quarrels divided the nobility into rival factions. For, strange to say, the opera dissension was made political capital of; and a formidable body of nobility conspired to break up Handel's opera. He made head against the tide with a giant's vigor, till he had lost all his earnings, and become diseased in body and in mind. Finally one arm was paralyzed. He was induced to leave cares and go over to Aix la Chapelle to recruit himself. He made summary work with this cure, as with everything. He sat thrice the usual time over the vapor baths; in three days he was exciting crowds to rapture, as he played like an angel just descended, on the organ of the neighboring church; and in six weeks he was in England again, composing operas as before. This was in 1736. He struggled on a few years more, but all in vain; the day had passed. The whole tide bore down against him; not only enemies whom he was too

proud to conciliate, but popular taste itself. Indeed, the Opera was but a fashion, and never really loved in England. The barren sentimentalities and trivialities of the Italian opera were no field for him. He was not born, like Gluck and Mozart, to bring out the peculiar genius of that sort of music. He was reserved for greater work. His quarrel with the singers was, in fact, a quarrel with the Opera itself, a contending against his own chosen position, a chafing against the wires of the cage to which he clung with mistaken fondness. He discovered it while he had yet strength left to turn the dark experience to account. He dropped the Opera, and took to the Oratorio. He had wrought so like a Hercules, for the love of it, because he was so full. He was a long time in finding himself out. The very glow of healthy activity made him careless as to the sphere he wrought in. Such a strong and ready engine finds its way unconsciously in whatever market is open for it. He was all this while only laboring for the present; and if he created any imperishable products, if he lavished on the immediate object more than that object was worth, it was quite unconsciously. Doubtless much of the pure ore of his own true genius long lay buried with the dusty volumes, the forty folios, of his forgotten operas, in the Royal Library. Rich mine that, with all its rubbish; and busily they are beginning now to work it.

The imperishable, the truly inspired songs and recitatives, scattered through the operas, will soon be separated from the rest; the part which belongs to Handel and to eternity will be separated from that which belongs to the days of George II. and the opera, and added to the classics of the art.

We cannot help remarking, in the Handel of those days, the publicity of the phenomenon. He loved the light. He passed his life in the eyes of all men. But there was not a particle of vanity or morbid ambition in this. Calmly he took his place there, and stood conspicuous, because it was his place. He never courted fortune; she came to him. His genius, we have said, was of a popular nature. It was for "old Sebastian Bach," his great contemporary (whom, by the by, he never saw), to stay at home in a small German town, and toil in solitude, producing gigantic works which he enjoyed in solitude and dedicated to Art for Art's sake. Handel was made to sway the minds of men. Bach was a mystic in music; Handel, the eloquent but thoroughly true and honest people's man. Bach's writings are now brought out from the dust of antiquity, like the buried leaves of a Sybil; Handel stood forth and prophesied before the eyes of men.

We have now arrived at the period of his greatest works. He sank in the Opera, to rise again in a glory which that could not give. He had already written several Oratorios, among others his "Esther," "Deborah," "Alexander's Feast," and recently his stupendous "Israel in Egypt." These were performed in the theatres during Lent, when operas were forbidden; and as they required no expensive scenery and decorations, he could not do better than address himself henceforward altogether to the public taste, which had declared itself so decidedly in favor of his earlier works of that kind. In 1741 he composed the work by which he is chiefly known—the highest and fullest expression of his soul, possibly the highest product of musical art, his "Messiah." It was begun and finished in twenty-one days! History has no other instance of such intense and lightning-like execution in any department of human activity.

We have not time to continue his history. He composed Oratorios till his death, which was in 1769, making him seventy-five years old. We only pause to contemplate two pictures. One is Handel in the full tide of success in England—the man of many cares, and who delighted in many cares, directing in the performance of his own operas, his great bag-wig the while vibrating, as it is said, with a peculiar motion that indicated his satisfaction and told the spectators when all went on to his mind. The other is the blind old man, led forward in the choir to make his obeisance to an audience affected to tears, before he sat

down to play the organ in his own oratorios. Then look at any picture of his full-length statue in Westminster Abbey, and recognize in his commanding form the like colossal proportions of his mind and character; calm, and steady, and cheerful, as his own open, placid countenance.

Let us now, then, approach the "MESSIAH." Let us study the plant in the full flower. Though not unsurpassed by others of his works in grandeur of execution; though not, like "Israel in Egypt," one vast mountain-chain, all choruses; yet, for its blending of the whole variety—mountains, plains, villages and streams—into one warm and life-like landscape; for poetic unity, for the dignity of its theme, for never-ending influence upon the minds of men, carried about, as it is, like thoughts of home and friends, in the everyday, familiar consciousness of so many, embalming their Christmas associations, interpreting to the heart if not to the head, the most pregnant sentences of Scripture; in fact, expressing all the essential juices of the Gospels, old and new, into one bright cordial, which goes straight and warm to the heart, quickening it into forgetfulness of dry dogmatics and the stumbling-blocks of tradition; for these, and many more good reasons, it must be regarded as his greatest work.

Strange as it seems, about the origin of this noble work there are several theories. Though but a century old, there is mist and uncertainty about its beginning, as if it were some old Iliad. The author is known, the date of its appearance too; but when and how did it originate in him? the date and manner of its creation? that is the question. And that is the question about all great works of genius. A certain mysterious suddenness marks their appearance; they are here, all fully organized and animated, to command our admiration; but of the first designs, the study, and the time it took to make them what they are, we can only conjecture. The grand, however near, has something of the obscurity of the distant and antique.

The usual account is this. Finding his operas fail, and weary with such trivial work; feeling that it was time now to do something more worthy of his genius and more befitting his years, as he was getting old; having always been of a religious turn; a staunch Lutheran in creed; well read in his Bible; particularly fond of the Prophets and of St. Paul; and deeply impressed with the one pervading theme of the Scriptures, the fall and redemption of man, he resolved to draw from all the resources of his Art, and put forth all his powers to make an eloquent exposition of his faith, in music, and interpret the Bible thus to the hearts of all men. In such a work he would discard the words and inventions of men. He would draw from the genuine fount of Inspiration; from the Scriptures themselves cull out the most pregnant sentences, and arrange them in an epic unity, like a small germ in which the whole tree should lie hid, needing only music to warm it out into full life. The story goes, that an English Archbishop, hearing of his intention, sent and begged him to "wait awhile, and he would write the words for him." But Handel replied indignantly, "Does he think that he can write better than prophets and apostles full of the Holy Ghost? or that I have not read and loved my Bible as well as he?" So he chose for himself such sentences as he wanted; and, having set them in due order, till they filled out the circle of his thought, began at the beginning and turned it into music.

So far as this is historical fact, it is well. But then in the main point, namely as regards its being a work of deliberate design on the part of Handel, it evidently is, and could only be conjectural. If it was, it is an exception to almost all great works of genius, which are not made to order, or from set purpose, but come spontaneously, Heaven knows how—grow with the growth of the man himself.

Far lovelier to the imagination is the theory which supposes the "Messiah" the result of slow, successive accretions; or rather, that it had a fragmentary and accidental origin; that he had long carried about in his head the independent

parts of it, till finally, in one glowing hour of genius, they were all fused into one perfect whole to the surprise of himself as of every one. This makes it seem more as if the design lay in the eternal counsels of Fate and God—as if the work was the culminating flower or fruit of the man's whole nature, and not the arbitrary manufacture of his will. This is stated by Zelter, perhaps the first of musical critics, in a letter to Goethe.

It is enough to mention these opinions. We proceed to examine the work itself. The main theme, which forms the nucleus and body of the Oratorio, is certainly the middle portion of it, which relates to the sufferings of Jesus upon earth, and which, taken by itself, is only another specimen of a form of composition so common among the early Church composers, called the *Passion*. Though not more than a fifth of the whole in length, yet in the consciousness of the hearer it occupies more than all the rest; for it is deeper and darker, so that we feel our way through it, and count the moments, and weigh each thought, and think not only of what we are now hearing, not only of "the sufferings of this present time," but also of "the glory which is to be revealed," while at the same time we look back upon that bright morning of promise, succeeded by this cloudy day. Swiftly fled the fond childlike anticipations of the first part, with its vision of shepherds, and starlight, and angels announcing the birth. Swiftly, too, without sense of time, we are buoyed up on those Hallelujahs and Songs of Immortality which follow. It was the wisdom of Art, thus to spend more words and notes upon the introduction and the close, diffuse in its treatment of the illuminated edges of the cloud, brief, condensed, and suggestive in painting its opaque body, on whose surface all this beauty plays.

Such, then, is the unity of the work. Such the way in which it is all evolved from the central theme, or "Passion." Life is often compared to a day. So also the "Messiah," which represents the whole story of life, its hopes, its toils, its everlasting results, embodied in the life of Jesus, may be said to correspond with the divisions of the day. On the dull and restless night of the overture breaks the red dawn of prophecy: "Comfort ye, my people." The wear and tear, the fruitful weariness and woe of busy day-time, answers to the "Passion." Calm, crystal light from the red west at sunset,—the pure crescent of a new moon above, and the friendly stars still brightening, whispering faith, and waking a love which cannot think of death,—is the fit scenery of the sentiment that follows: "I know that my Redeemer liveth!"

And now let us try to do some justice in detail to our memory of this never to be forgotten music, tracing its songs and choruses along in order, and lingering as long as we dare in each favorite spot; a pleasant task, of which the hardest part will be the self-denial of having to pass rudely by many a beauty, if we would get through within any reasonable space.

Each part, beautiful as it is singly, must be understood and appreciated in its membership to the great whole. The overture, (a critic suggests,) is purposely dull. First, a slow movement in a minor key, significant of nothing but emptiness and weariness; then a quick, nervous fugue, a struggling as of many forces to disengage themselves and find relief; each, however, set against the other; a strife which ends in nothing; a helpless, hopeless, passionate impatience. This is the night of sinful and suffering humanity, and is the background on which the radiant form of Prophecy alights. The struggling fugue subsides, and remains in the imagination a night-mare which must be shaken off, a discord which cries for solution. The fever is at the crisis; relief must soon come, if at all.

And now steal in those fresh, Spring-like notes, from the instruments, in the major of the key (which happens to be that warmest and sunniest of all the keys, E major,—the same in which the sunny Haydn so delighted, the same in which he wrote the sunrise symphony in his "Creation.") and a clear, consoling, manly voice is heard:

"Comfort ye, my people, speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, for her warfare is accomplished, her iniquity is pardoned;" and rising to a tone of more eloquent and authoritative assurance adds: *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord.* But observe, the music here is not dramatic. It does not impersonate the prophet and the voice in the wilderness; it hears them; or remembers them and muses on them. It is Israel with a heavy heart, when her need is the sorest, bethinking herself of her prophets and her precious holy sentences. And in this musing mood how naturally comes up the memory of other sentences, more minutely figurative, the "dear images" (as Rochlitz says,) which are dwelt upon and imitated in the song: "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill made low; the crooked straight, and the rough places plain;" a species of imitation so literal and out of the province of true art, that it would require excuse in any other case, where feeling did not justify the fondling over trifles. And now comes the fugued chorus of joy, leaping forth as if it could not contain itself. The first phrase, "And the glory of the Lord," is begun by the alto, and then immediately resounded in all the parts; then a second phrase, "shall be revealed," with a more flowing rhythm, starts with the tenor, is pursued by the bass, then the alto, then the soprano, till all are whirled away in a swift and graceful play of hide-and-seek; and again a third phrase, begun and repeated in the same way, on the words, "And all flesh shall see it together," comes in to increase the harmonious confusion. And so, buoyantly, wave upon wave rolls in and falls back upon others coming after, while the bass, in long loud notes—holding upon the words, "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it"—seems like the boundless reservoir of Ocean behind all.

This completes the first sketch, or introduction of the Oratorio. It is all fresh and Spring-like, and full of what is now given in more detail.

A bass voice recites the words: "Thus saith the Lord: Yet once a little while, and I will shake the earth, &c. . . . and the desire of all nations shall come," &c. But the confidence inspired by these words yields to a momentary misgiving in that most beautiful bass song, in the minor, "But who may abide the day of his coming;" which rises to wild terror at the thought: "For he is like a refiner's fire." Then begins a single high voice in a musing, half involuntary tone, as if struck with the thought that there is hope in the words, "And he shall purify," and then again, more confidently and with a prolonged and florid melody, "And he shall purify the sons of Levi." The bass takes up the suggestion, and one part after another, till all grow enthusiastic with the thought, and the kindling fugue becomes one blended, heavenward soaring flame; when all the voices unite, "That they may offer unto the Lord an offering of righteousness." The chorus dies away; and again we are introduced into the solitude of the believing heart, feeding upon its delicious secret, the hopes of prophecy. The deep, tender, full-hearted, innocent contralto sings over to itself the promise: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive," and then gives way (like a child talking to herself, so in earnest with her own sweet thoughts, that she forgets she is alone) to a rapturous, ever varied, fondly repeated melody: "O thou that tellest glad tidings to Zion," &c., so steeped in feeling! so heavily drooping with excess of love, and faith, and piety! so confident of the sympathy of all and everything! so much so, that all the sweetness and majesty of the skies seem to blend in it with the accompaniments! Trustful, happy child, to whose devout thought it is all smiles and sunshine, even in the midst of darkness! When she reaches the words, "And the glory of the Lord has risen upon thee," the accompaniments cease, and the voice sinks slowly down, as in a swoon of delight, through almost an octave, and there our souls hang poised in the magical sphere of the *flat seventh*, when all manner of sweet dreamy imaginations, "children of the air," swim up round us in figures of the violins, and seem to balance themselves upon our shoulders, and

cling round our necks. And now from this blissful inner world of faith, from the holy recesses of the pious heart, we are led by a descriptive bass recitative to the world without; "*For behold, darkness shall cover the earth.*" But to us, prepared as we have been, it is a darkness big with expectation; and wondrously the music swells and brightens with the words, "*But the Lord shall arise, and the Gentiles shall come to thy light.*" &c. And in the song that follows, we see the people groping their way in darkness—darkness without and within. Here is no fine shading; no harmony of colors; for there is no light to see by; the harmony is all absorbed into dark unison; we feel our way along; the rhythm, the movement alone intimates what is passing in the dark; in stately, gloomy octaves, voice and instruments move on together.

Enough of these visions! the mind is over-full and must find vent. We are come to another of those grand halting-places, where the gathering crowd of thoughts, as they hurry on towards the consummation, must pause, as it were, and turn round and shout; another of those mighty choruses, each mightier than the last, which seem to sum up all that goes before, and measure the progress of the piece; or shall we call them periodical inundations, in which the silent depths of emotion and enthusiasm, which have been all this while secretly feeding the springs of the heart, rise and testify their fullness? It is the chorus: "*Unto us a child is born!*" Zelter says that in the original it was not intended to come in until after the "Annunciation." "After the shepherds," he says, "have heard the words of the angel in the field by night, and recovered from the terror, one party begins: '*Unto us a child is born,*' and toys innocently with the thought; then follows another in the same way; then the third, then the fourth, till at the words, '*Wonderful, Counsellor,*' &c., all unite: the flocks of the field, the hosts of stars of the whole heavens, all awake and stir with life and gladness." But in Mozart's arrangement, which is always used, this chorus, (for what reason I cannot tell,) comes first. I could not describe it better than in the words of Rochlitz:—

"Six—not more than six measures of *Ritornel* (instrumental symphony) contain at the outset all the musical ideas, of which this very long chorus is woven, with the exception of a single one, which Handel, for a good reason (as we shall soon hear), could not betray till its time came. These ideas are here plainly, but powerfully stated. They are so characteristic and expressive, that I have never yet been to a performance, without remarking, how every face, however serious and clouded over during the last passage, brightened up at the first sound of the instruments, before a single voice began. The soprano voice begins alone, in the principal theme of the music, announcing the glad tidings, '*Unto us a child is born, a son is given,*' while the instruments alternating with a second thought play on softly by themselves. Then the tenor takes up the same words with the same melody; but before it has half announced the message, the first, as if it could not contain itself, falls in again with the same tones, and carries it out with more spirit (while the tenor finishes) and with a richer figure (the third musical idea), in which joyous movement the instruments are almost hushed. Now the alto takes up the words to the first melody; that is interrupted by the bass, as the tenor was by the soprano; till the tenor, without instruments (except the continued bass), and in majestic solemn style, adds: '*And the government shall be upon his shoulders;*' the others, as if timid, merely say it over after; especially the vocal bass, slowly and stately coming up from the deep, as if thinking and doubting still. Then all, as if by inspiration, suddenly exclaim, '*And his name shall be called WONDERFUL, COUNSELLOR, THE MIGHTY GOD, THE EVERLASTING FATHER, PRINCE OF PEACE;*' and with that word '*Wonderful,*' all the fullness of the choir and of the orchestra, hitherto kept back, rushes together like many mountain torrents into one flood, and all souls bow entranced before the power of this single accord, which Handel could not betray before, that it might surprise. The voices and instruments all together (except the trumpets and drums, reserved for still greater use), simply exclaim one of those lofty names—pause awhile, that it may have time to echo far and wide—and then exclaim another, still in the same chord, and pause again, and another, and so on—while the violins take up that first joyous figure of the soprano, soar up into the sky with it, and there in warbling thirds bind those single exclamations together. Handel in this chorus works over these same ideas, in essentially the same manner, and yet with the greatest variety, twice more; till all the voices, and all the instruments, and all the ideas unite at length, and at the climax of their inspiration proclaim the whole glad tidings yet again. A *Ritornel* plays over once more the

principal themes, and lets the soul down gently and gradually from the ever-gaining and by this time too intense excitement."

And now comes the Christmas spectacle of the Nativity, an exquisite piece of picture music. It has been well likened to one of those altarpieces by the old painters on the same subject, exceedingly simple in its means, yet beautiful and full of feeling. First is the "Pastoral Symphony," a Siciliano movement, soft and flowing, confined to a very few of the simplest chords, the melody flowing in thirds (that first harmony which natural, untaught singers discover for themselves,) and all by the few unaided stringed instruments, which form the heart of the orchestra. To these Mozart has added flutes, and the effect is an all-pervading streaming up of sweetest sounds, as if they exhaled from the leaves and flowers, from all the pores of the earth. The air teems with melody "smoothing the raven down of darkness till it smiles." As Zelter says "you feel the starlight." This forms the overture.

Then comes the recitative, "*There were Shepherds abiding in the fields.*" &c. Then there is a waving of wings in the air, nearer and nearer, as the approach of the angel of the Lord is recited; and then a clear, crystal, bell-toned voice, calm and without passion, announces the birth of the Saviors to the shepherds; and the violins fill the air full of wings at the words; "*Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host.*" In the song of the angels, which is composed of high and silvery chords, there is exquisite music, such as only floats down in our thoughts on a clear night in the skies, when the boundless firmament above mirrors the spiritual firmament within, and nature and we are one thought. At the words, "*Peace on earth!*" proclaimed in long full tones, there is a pause while the echo rolls away amid short, full, measured pulses of the instruments, which seems like the throbbing of all nature's sympathetic joy. And playfully are the words passed about among the multitudinous voices in the air, in broken fugue, "*Good will towards man.*"

This scenic interlude, or play within play, over, the grand business of the Oratorio proceeds; namely, contemplation and celebration of the great event with all its consequences. A soprano voice soars up like a lark into the blue of heaven, and pours down floods of rapturous, flowery melodies in the song: "*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!*"—Joy uncontainable—that cannot fly high enough, in the very excess of its joyfulness, feeling more than ever the chains of earth, so that in despair of utterance it yields at last to a sweet melancholy, and sinks so full of feeling in the solemn, almost condoling passage: "*He is the righteous Savior.*" Then follows: "*The eyes of blind shall be opened,*" &c., and that most heavenly air (again in the pastoral Siciliano rhythm) "*He shall feed his flocks,*" &c., so full of consolation, inspiring one with that holy sweet content, which sermons only make us feel the want of. Some one said of it, "God grant that this song may float before my mind, when I rest upon my death-bed. Gladly must the eyes close upon all that is left behind and that was dear to the heart, in the fulness of such hope." Then comes the chorus: "*His yoke is easy,*" &c.

This closes the first part. It is refreshing and elevating to stand right within the roar and spray of Niagara, if one can tarry long, and dwell at leisure on its various views and features. But to hurry rapidly by, with the hope of seeing and doing justice to it all in a given time, only irritates and dissipates the mind. There is a bend in the river, three miles below, where one sees the whole in the distance, and comprehends it easily, in all its beauty, if not in its sublimity. In this way we shall be obliged to treat the remainder of this Niagara of oratorios,—to stand further off, and give but a general, bird's eye view of the other parts.

The second portion, consisting of some dozen choruses and airs, describes the Passion, and constitutes, as we said, the body of the piece. For it is "the divine depths of sorrow," out of which the whole mysterious work of redemption is per-

fectured. The music grows very deep here. You are reminded of the earnest business of life, of the serious price, the toil and study and long-suffering, by which all good must be earned. You no longer delight in the gay flowers and gems of countless forms of beauty which strew life's surface, gleaming in the sun; you are led down into the dark laboratory where, amid pain, privation and patience, these beautiful results are prepared. Most perfect type of this universal fact in human life was the suffering of Jesus. The first chorus, "*Behold the Lamb of God,*" with its dark minor chords, brings threatening clouds over us, which hang so low, as almost to suffocate; we are weighed down with intensity of gloom. Its rhythm, too, is that of the great restless heaving ocean, each swell thundering on the shore with a more ominous sound. This chorus is not so much the voice of the multitude; it is not as if you heard persons singing; but rather as if you saw them looking each other in the face in the stony silence of stifled woe. It is rather a descriptive symphony, performed by a great choir of voices, instead of instruments, for the sake of the greater mass of sound; a sort of vocal overture. And now comes the sweet relief of tears; now grief finds a voice in that most pathetic song ever written: "*He was despised and rejected.*" It is said that a friend, calling upon Handel while in the act of setting these pathetic words, found him actually sobbing. We must pass over the choruses and songs, which describe his persecution and the taunts of the multitude, only casting behind one lingering look of awe and admiration upon the sainted form who rises before us, mild, majestic, eloquently silent, as we hear the recitative: "*Thy rebuke hath broken his heart;*" and "*Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto his sorrow.*" It is the apotheosis of grief. The whole part Zelter characterizes thus: "Suffering and death: brief, but not crowded; great, still, affecting; no torments, no crucifying, and that sort of thing; the sorrow of the just over the degradation of the good and beautiful."

I cannot leave this part however, without remarking upon the singular chorus: "*All we like sheep have gone astray,*" whose wild, mournful, almost comic style, breaking in in the midst of so much sadness, has puzzled many critics. The most of an apology which Rochlitz has been able to make for it, is to suppose it necessary for variety. But genius never stoops to so low a reason. The smallest part of its work stands by the like inward necessity with the greatest, with the whole. To me this chorus does not seem to break the moral and poetic unity of the work, but rather to strengthen and complete it. The tramping, truant, reckless motion with which it sets out, the voices running away in all directions, each with a phrase: "*We have turned,*" and "*every one to his own way,*"—this is but sin glorying in its shame, and making the most of its hard case by getting up a little alcoholic exhilaration for the time. But the weight of the chorus lies not here. This is but the introduction and preparation by contrast for the main theme which follows. With what unerring fatality all this drunken furor subsides into reflection on the dread, retributive, other side of the matter, in the profoundly solemn adagio at the close: "*And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*"

We must not stop to notice the many admirable things in the third part, which, beginning with the resurrection of Jesus, and the great chorus, "*Lift up your heads, O ye gates,*" (forming a finale to all this last), goes on to celebrate the fruits of his death, and describe the sending forth of preachers, and the triumphant conflict of the Word with the powers of darkness. This part, too, has its grand finale. Enthusiasm has reached the acme, and breaks forth in the celebrated "Hallelujah Chorus." Handel confessed, in his later years, that when he composed this chorus "he knew not whether he was in the body or out of the body." The simplicity and grandeur of its massive structure, and the universality of its sentiment, make it one of those works which never can be represented on too vast a scale. No multitude of voices can overdo it. There is no bloating or exaggerating, by any

representation, these great granite ranges in the world of musical art. In England, their traditional associations with the "Hallelujah Chorus," as performed at the great commemoration of Handel in Westminster Abbey, form a part of the national treasure. Dr. Burney closes his account of it thus:

"Dante, in his 'Paradiso,' imagines nine circles, or choirs of cherubs, seraphs, patriarchs, prophets, martyrs, saints, angels, and archangels, who, with hand and voice, are eternally praising and glorifying the Supreme Being, whom he places in the centre, taking the idea from the 'TE DEUM LAUDAMUS.' Now, as the orchestra in Westminster Abbey seemed to ascend into the clouds, and unite with the saints and martyrs represented on the painted glass in the west window, which had all the appearance of a continuation of the orchestra, I could hardly refrain, during the performance of the 'Alleluiah,' to imagine that this orchestra, so admirably constructed, filled and employed, was a point or segment of one of those celestial circles. And perhaps no band of mortal musicians ever exhibited a more respectable appearance to the eye, or afforded a more extatic and affecting sound to the ear than this.

"So sang they, and the empyrean rang
With allelujahs."

The last part celebrates the great doctrine of immortality, opening with the song, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," which it is well that we must hurry over, for no words are worthy of it. Who is not a believer while he gives himself up to that song? And who soon forgets it? In the doubts and fears of weaker moments, that will surely come to thee, recall its heavenly sound, and wait in peace till thou shalt be thyself again!

One thing here we would remark. What a mystery is this matter of the keys in music! Each seems a separate sphere or element. Here we are again in the clear, blue, sunny, upper air of E major, the heaven of prophecy, where those first tones of hope came upon us in "Comfort ye, my people." Then it was sweet dependence on a heavenly promise; now it is the very sense and inward realization of Immortality, "for now is Christ risen." It is too much to feel: too much for a poor child of circumstances; the miracle and glory of it must be celebrated in the thrilling trumpet-song, "Behold I tell you a mystery."

And what can we say of the triple accumulation of choruses at the end? First, "Worthy the Lamb," then, "Blessing and honor be unto him," which, if not more sublime, are at least more elaborate than the "Hallelujah;" and then, when the hearer thinks there can be no more, the vocal torrent bursts the shackles of words, and on the two syllables of "Amen," revels with all the freedom of an orchestra in the most magnificent of Fugues.

[Conclusion next week.]

For Dwight's Journal of Music.

From my Diary. No. XIII.

NEW YORK, Dec. 10. I translate the following notice of a concert from the *Beobachter am Ohio* of Sunday, Dec. 5. This is a German paper published at Louisville, Ky.

"Whoever was present last Sunday evening at the Sacred Concert in the Apollo Hall, will certainly not fail to be present on this (Sunday) evening. The violin solos of the young virtuoso, Herr Anton Zöller alone are sufficient to chain an audience. As we hear, he will perform Ernst's 'Carnival.' His brother, George Zöller, will perform variations by Liszt on the piano. The theatrical corps will not fail to do their part, and will distinguish themselves, especially Herr Adlersberg, by the declamation of *des Glockengusses zu Breslau* (the Casting of the Bell at Breslau); and Herr Hermann by the production of several new songs.

Sacred, very!

Dec. 17. A correspondent of the *Boston Journal* writes from "t' other side,"

"You know everybody sings in Germany (except me,) and in one of these venerable Gothic buildings, one is filled with emotion to see the whole congregation rising as by one impulse, and singing an old hymn which perhaps Luther wrote—when perhaps in that very church Luther had often preached. The organs, of course, are the finest, and the arches and every part of the edifice will be filled with melody."

What an ear for music that correspondent must have!

Dec. 18. A foreign Journal brings a new instance of the skill with which the princes of the Austrian Imperial

house excite the affection of the people,—one that is worth translating:

The archduke, Francis Charles, spent some time at the baths of Ischl during the summer of 1849, and received a serenade one evening from the Band of the Ischl National Guard. One of the pieces performed pleased him so much that he sent to have it repeated. During its repetition, the chamberlain of the Archduke, a certain Count Wurmbrand, came out and ordered the musicians in an angry tone, to cease playing. "His Imperial Highness," added the Count, "does not like this everlasting tooting, and for my part it is enough for me to cast my eye upon this blue-coated rabble." The musicians of course withdrew in a rage, and the excitement of the people was such that they talked of breaking the Archduke's windows, giving him a *colathumpian* serenade, &c. The principal physician of the place succeeded in quieting the people, by the promise of visiting the Archduke at the head of a committee the next day. The committee went, and was received with great politeness by his Highness, who was astonished and enraged at learning the object of the visit. The chamberlain was at once called, and received a strong rebuke for his false and impolite speech to the musicians. Wurmbrand endeavored to excuse himself,—he had been too much in a hurry; was very sorry, &c.

"Herr Count," said the Archduke, "to-morrow evening at 6 o'clock you will take your place in the balcony of my dwelling, beg pardon of the people, and then leave Ischl."

In the presence of the large crowd who assembled to see the spectacle, Wurmbrand obeyed the order of his master and immediately left the place.

Dwight's Journal to-day brings the conclusion of the article upon *Die Ruinen von Athen*, and to my utter surprise, I find the name "G. A. Macfarren" attached to it as its author. Surprise, I say, because Macfarren's name occupies a high and well-earned position in the musical circles of England. Upon his criticism of the music of *Die Ruinen* I have nothing to say, but the historical introduction to the article is a fair subject of comment.

Is it more than just to require of any one, who pretends to instruct, even though it be only in an article in a periodical, that he fully and carefully make himself master of all the authorities within his reach? Now Macfarren has not done this; for Schindler, to whom once in his article he refers, clears up some of his undetermined points, and the additions to Schindler, in the appendices to the English translation of his works, gives the necessary information upon others. The *Harmonicon* of course might have been consulted, and almost as assuredly might the writer have found a copy of "Beethoven's Studien" in London. That we all are liable to mistakes, no one denies, for authorities differ, and not seldom are wrong—but every one touching upon historic ground is bound to consult the authorities.

Let us see whether the well-known works above mentioned will not clear up many of Mr. M.'s difficulties.

(1.) "The overture was sent by Beethoven, with two others—which I believe were the overture to King Stephen, and the overture in C, op. 124—through Ferdinand Ries to the Philharmonic Society in London."

Now had the writer turned to Schindler, Vol. II, 231, he would have found the agreement between Beethoven and the Philharmonic, dated Feb. 5, 1816, in which it is stated that Mr. Neate took the overtures in July 1816; and on turning to Vol. I, page 199, he would have found that the overture in C, with the double Fugue, (Op. 124) was composed in the summer of 1822. I think that the third of the three overtures must have been the overture in C, op. 115. (See B.'s letter to Neate, Schindler, Vol. II, p. 227.) "Should you not have sent them (the three overtures) off, I should like to revise the overture in C major, as it may be somewhat incorrect."

(2.) "With the exception of the March and Chorus, 'Twine ye Garlands,' the dramatic music of the *Ruins of Athens* was, I have understood, discovered some eight or nine years ago in an unfrequented store-room of the Pesth theatre, where it had lain so entirely unheeded since its first production that its very existence had been forgotten."

Where did Mr. M. understand that? Now see Schindler again, Vol. I, p. 198: "The third of October, 1822—the name-day of the Emperor Francis—was fixed for the opening of the new Theatre in the Josephstadt, on which occasion the music to *Die Ruinen von Athen* which Bee-

thoven wrote in 1812 for the opening of the New Theatre in Pesth, with a new text, adapted to time and place, by Carl Meissel, several new pieces, and a new overture, was to be performed." Had "its very existence been forgotten"? Again, in the list published in "Beethoven's Studien" of the property sold at auction after the great composer's death, I find, "lot 164, *Ruinen von Athen*," under the general head of "Original Manuscripts left by L. von Beethoven, mostly perfect, written by his own hand, and not yet printed"—found in a stage room of the Pesth theatre eight or nine years ago! From other sources than those which alone I shall quote in these notes to the article in question, I happen to know that all the music as soon as used was sent back to Beethoven.

(3.) "I can form but a very faint conjecture as to the period at which it was composed."

The citation from Schindler above says 1812. [Schindler would seem to have made a mistake of a few months in his date, judging from a letter of B.'s, of which a manuscript copy lies before me dated Feb. 8, 1812. One sentence in it is "being interpreted," as I did not receive the overtures from Hungary until yesterday, that shall be copied as quickly as possible and sent to you. Moreover, I will add a March and vocal chorus to them, also from the "Ruins of Athens."]

(5.) "And all this while the Duet in G minor, the Chorus in E minor, and the Chorus in G in this same Masque of the Ruins of Athens, compositions which even Beethoven never surpassed, remained still unknown, unplayed save on the occasion of their original production."

The citation under (2) is a sufficient reply to this, as that shows that they were produced on the 3d of October, 1822.

(4.) Mr. M. speaks of John van Beethoven's sale of his brother's works unknown to the composer, &c. The passage in Ries (Schindler, Vol. II, p. 256) refers to op. 124, and not to one of the three sent to the Philharmonic. In the same volume, p. 272, is a letter to Ries in which the overture in C, op. 115, is spoken of as not yet published. Now, as at this time (1825) the Philharmonic had not seen fit either to perform or publish either of the three overtures, might not Beethoven feel himself authorized to consider them his property and use them accordingly on the Continent. [Op. 115, and op. 124, are reviewed in the German musical periodical, "Cæcilia," in 1826, as if just published, the former by Steiner & Co., Vienna, the latter by Schott, of Mayence.]

These are the principal points in the article from the *Musical World*, of a historic character, and they are all I care about noting; that the work as a whole is nothing very great is true enough. Beethoven, like Webster, needed something to draw him out. When he had a task set him, as in this case, and when he wrote the "Glorious Moment," in honor of the Vienna Congress, the result was task work; but that the Philharmonic did not make a mistake as to two of three overtures sent them, can hardly be affirmed by any one who has read the history of that Society's reception of Beethoven's 8th and 9th Symphonies.

"It is matter of very considerable wonder that Beethoven, who was most jealous of his reputation, should have submitted so weak a production to the public," &c.

Beethoven himself, in a letter—not included however in the English works, which the writer might have consulted—says, that the overture to the *Ruinen* is in a lighter (literally "lesser") style, but that it is suited to a light miscellaneous concert, or something to that effect. Mr. M. thinks it no wonder "that even Beethoven should have produced an overture that is without merit." Look now at the circumstances. Beethoven is now—toward the close of 1811—known as the greatest of composers. The people of Pesth, a principal city of Hungary, are to inaugurate their new opera house, and apply to him to prepare the music for the occasion. A grand overture is required to do honor to King Stephen—St. Stephen—him whose iron crown disappeared when Kossuth fled an exile and Hungary's liberty fell—an overture national in its character, and worthy of him whose name is still a name "to conjure by" with every Magyar. For this the overture in E flat, which the Philharmonic Society treated as they did the *Eroica*, the 7th and the 9th Symphonies! Which they thought unworthy of its author, but which from that day to this has not lost its charm

for a Vienna, a Berlin, or a Leipsic audience. Besides this, there was music to be composed to a little piece prepared as a mere show for the occasion—something to please the popular ear, something light and pleasing—something in comparison with the Symphonies, like the piano-forte Bagatelles of the same composer when compared with his wonderful Sonatas. This Beethoven wrote; for the purpose it was good enough. It answered the purpose, and all parties were satisfied. Afterward on another and greater occasion, when he has to do honor to the reigning Emperor, this light overture is changed for one of his mightiest creations, the overture op. 124, and the music adapted to the new circumstances.

That Beethoven should have sent the feeble one to London, I can only account for by a reference to the pecuniary difficulties under which he was laboring just at that moment when he had adopted his deceased brother's son, and was involved in the suit at law to keep possession of the boy against the wishes of the child's immoral mother.

Dwight's Journal of Music.

BOSTON, DEC. 25, 1852.

Christmas!

There is music worthy of this day,—a day associated with those highest, holiest, deepest, largest sympathies of all Humanity, of which Music is the only satisfactory language. The air was full of music, angel voices, on the morning of Christ's birth; the heavenly instincts of humanity then, as it were, heard their own mysterious, yet native music from their too long lost and forgotten home of unity and peace and love and divine order, floating down upon this mortal sea of strife and selfishness and feverish, ignoble cares, reminding them of the true destiny, and inspiring hope of final reconciliation, man everywhere with man, and all mankind with God. The child that was born that morning was to grow up the type of perfect humanity, of a life all love and consecration to the cause of the Most High, which, properly considered, is the cause of every human being. In him history was to receive forever a bright, eminent solution of the mystery of this human nature, in the mazes of whose strange, contradictory impulses, blindly striving after unity and fulness of immortal life, yet working out continually unworthy differences and meanness, we all wander. Christ lived a model of Humanity at one with God. And the world by barren speculations, by disputes and arguments, in cunning words which define and separate and distinguish in their statement, until the living essence has almost escaped, has sought for so long to interpret and bring home his life and mission. Leave doctrinal discussion and exclusive creeds alone, and let music speak, music, which is the divine language of the great sentiments of humanity in which all can unite. The common worship of all Christendom is embodied more in its music than in any other medium. Large, humanitarian, all-embracing sentiments were the burden of the angel music at Christ's birth. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to man!" What music these texts have inspired, and how that music lives to unite our humane, upward aspirations in spite of all our intellectual and formal differences! The *Glorias* of the Catholic mass have a sweet, true sound to the most Protestant among us; humanity, in its hour of highest consciousness of a divine relationship, and of a unitary destiny, inspired them.

But we have the whole significance of Christ's advent upon earth embodied more completely and sublimely still,—we have the Christmas emotions and associations, all translated into grand and perfect forms of music, to be quickened into life as often as we will, in Handel's oratorio of "The Messiah," which was inspired, if ever any work of human genius is, directly from above. What worthier celebration of this day's happiness and this day's meaning, than to sit together where the vibrations of these grand, humanitarian harmonies shall through our senses reach our souls, and make us vibrate inwardly in unison of such high sentiment! We wish our country readers could be gathered in the city this evening, to partake with us of the high feast prepared with admirable care and thoroughness, and ample provision of means,—in our new musical temple, too, whose architecture harmonizes with sublime thoughts,—by our Musical Education Society. Wishing all to feel as we do about this music, and feeling that we have once, long since, said our say about it, we have ventured to occupy a large part of to-day's paper with an old record of the impression we received from Handel's oratorio.

Second Musical Fund Concert.

The Music Hall was very full on Saturday night, evincing increased confidence on the part of the public in the efficiency of the orchestra as recently in part reorganized. But there was one cause of complaint in the measures taken, with the very best wish of course, to accommodate all of the subscribers who applied for secured seats. So numerous were the applications as to encroach very much upon the alternate rows of seats that were intended to be left open to the earliest comers. But those, whose tickets bore no numbers, wandered about in vain search for any seats remaining unreserved. One spied a tempting vacancy through some one of the doors, but before he could reach it found it was reserved. So great was the complaint, both then and since, in private and in newspapers, that we understand the Society have concluded to return to the old practice of leaving all seats alike open. Certain it is, that there are but two practicable alternatives: either to number *every* ticket, or to have no numbering at all. We should prefer the former plan, since we feel it a serious tax upon one's time to go an hour or two beforehand to secure a good seat at a concert, and because in any case we like to know and go to just our assigned place, without any fuss or wandering about, even if that seat be the poorest in the house. Still, as there scarcely can be said to be a very bad seat in the new Hall, we are quite reconciled to the last decision of the Fund Society. We think it wholly unreasonable in the complainants at last Saturday's experiment, to speak, as some do, harshly of the Society, who of course were pushed to that experiment by the pressure of a very generally expressed public opinion in the matter, and by a very laudable desire to leave no room for such complaints as had been made after the last concerts of Sontag and Alboni.

As to the concert itself, the Symphony (Mendelssohn's Third) was given with a good deal of spirit, and more of the fine points of the music emerged into possibility of distinct recognition, than ever before in Tremont Temple times; es-

pecially we noticed as never before the bold outline of that passage in the first Allegro, where the momentum of the music accumulates to a tempestuous force and strings and basses and all rush up and down through several chromatic scales with fearful energy. That used to sound confused to us, if we remember. Yet the rendering this time was not so happy, as a whole, as at the rehearsal on the day before, and there were some *tempos* too spasmodically urged through. We were too much refreshed however by a new hearing of this admirable symphony to feel in any mood for criticism.

In the overture to *Leonora*, the outside trumpet flourish was very felicitously done, so as to give new force and beauty to the whole passage. The overture to "Robert Devereux" proved to be that of Donizetti's opera, instead of a new thing by Wallace, as misprinted in the newspaper programmes. Certainly no great of an overture. This, with two instrumental solos, and too much singing, made the second half of the concert a little *ennuyeux*. Yet there was much to approve and to enjoy in the vocal efforts of Miss WEBB, especially in her last piece, the "Happy Birdling," with flute obligato, by Wallace, in which she displayed a great deal of execution, and a clear, penetrating, oftentimes sweet quality of upper voice. The *Regnava nel silenzio*, from *Lucia di Lammermoor*, was given in good chaste style and feeling, but the voice labored with the effort and had not strength enough of low notes. "Auld Robin Gray" requires a woman's experience and the greatest dramatic power to make it other than irksome in a concert room; yet we were surprised that a young girl could do it so well.

When will our friends of the Fund Society give us at a concert some of those fine overtures of which we have had a taste now and then at their rehearsals:—say Cherubini's *Les Abencerages*, Beethoven's *Le Roi Etienne*, &c. Cherubini, especially, is one of the really great writers, of whom we all know too little.

Handel and Haydn Society.

We can but unite in the general chorus of praises which has followed the first performance of "Judas Maccabæus," on Sunday evening. As a whole, no former triumph of our old Oratorio Society stands out in our memory at all in comparison with it. The *Stabat Mater*, with Sontag, was sung as well, much better to be sure, in the solo parts; but a Rossini's *Stabat Mater* is a small thing compared with an oratorio of Handel. The spacious Music Hall was completely filled with audience, and a more unanimous attention we have never witnessed from the beginning to the end of so much solid music. The piece has been judiciously shortened by the omission of choruses and songs here and there, to the amount of perhaps one fourth of the whole, leaving it just long enough to occupy the ear and mind without fatigue. Not that any of the music is in anywise heavy or uninteresting. It is of the true Handelian stamp, bold, vigorous, buoyant, strengthening and inspiring to the soul jaded with the miscellaneous sweets and spices, both the eccentric and the common-place, of many lighter concerts. Give us Handel, when we want to be refreshed and set upon our feet, and made to feel the solid ground beneath us, and the clearest,

cheerfullest of skies above us. Give us one of his grand choruses to *orient* us after many idle, weak and dreamy wanderings and dallies among more fashionable and less earnest Muses. Give us his grand way of working through an entire subject on a grand and massive scale, without a particle of flagging or of inconsistency from the beginning to the end, when our mind has grown distracted with a little of this and a little of that, good, bad and indifferent, served up in medleys for the blunted appetite night after night. Give us the repose of a grand action; and in becoming hearers of a Handel oratorio, let us be *quasi* sharers in the sense there is of real rest and recreation in the achievement of such broad and sound and generous work as his!

We cannot agree with a contemporary, with whom we have many musical sympathies, that this music was dull and heavy. There is much of course in our occasional moods; but we enjoyed every note of that music with a zest which we experience none too often. What can be more solemn, full of a manly and believing, not a weak, despairing sorrow, than the opening chorus: *Mourn, ye afflicted children?* What more rich and soul-stirring, what more musically interesting in its complicated structure, than the chorus before battle:

"Hear us, O Lord! on Thee we call,
Resolved on conquest, or a glorious fall."

That prayer is itself a battle, so earnest is it, so heroically pressing through the thick of difficulties. What more exciting than *Fall'n is the foe*, with the *pianissimo* whispers of the full chorus upon the word *fall'n*, or more inspiring than, *See, the conquering hero comes!* It is all full of variety and contrast, and all grandly beautiful to the end. By no means so great an effort as the "Messiah," or the "Israel in Egypt," it is still a noble, a delightful, a truly Handelian oratorio.

The choruses were all given with a precision, promptness, fervor and expression, and a regard to light and shade, which was in the highest degree satisfactory. One or two slight inadvertencies were scarcely worth the naming, where the whole was so good. A better choral performance on the whole we know not that we ever heard. This was doubtless due in a great measure to the conducting of Herr Bergmann and the admirable accompaniment by the "Germanians." It was most satisfactorily re-assuring, if one had any doubts before, to hear the violins take up that Allegro in the overture with such a firm and certain grasp; it made you feel that all would certainly go well. Much was due also to the conscientious drill to which the singers had submitted with a right good will.

The solos, coming all from amateurs, were better than we could have reasonably expected. Miss STONE sang *From Mighty Kings*, with the preceding recitative, with new truth of style and feeling superadded to all her old splendor of voice. How gloriously the high notes told throughout that hall! Mrs. WENTWORTH's sweet, *petite*, fine, clean little bird-like notes penetrated to every hearer, and her whole style and manner, so cheerfully serious and decent, seemed in harmony with her quaint song:

"Pious orgies, pious airs,
Decent sorrow, decent prayers."

The Duet, *O! lovely Peace*, by the two ladies, was far more successful on the repetition than

the first time, when their double trills, &c., were not quite in tune. Mr. FROST, for one not long enured to such arduous work, did himself much credit in *Sound an alarm*, and *Call forth thy powers*; his is a rich, clear, telling tenor; he gave the songs with the best energy he could, but they require a great deal more; and in the recitative he did not tread his way with that confidence which belongs only to an accomplished artist. Mr. HAMILTON's bass solos, otherwise good, suffered from bad intonation. The organ was *hors du combat*, but Mr. MÜLLER's prompt touch at the piano greatly reassured the singers. More hereafter.

— We must omit till next week any notice of OTTO DRESEL's gem of a Concert; also of the last "Quintette" and "Germania" Concerts. Yet we must note the very favorable impression produced at the latter by the young vocal *debutante*, Miss ELISE HENSLEY, who sang, between the parts, the aria from *Il Giuramento*. In spite of a slight tremulousness at first, her voice grew upon the audience by its rare power, richness, warmth and penetrating quality, especially in the high tones. She seemed animated by a true musical spirit, too, and to possess, although with little art as yet, some of the magnetic power which goes to make a singer. Her modest manner told, too, in her favor. There was unanimous and enthusiastic applause from the very large audience, most of whom could have had no prepossessions in the matter. She was admirably accompanied by JAEHL. When called out, she sang Schubert's *Ungeduld*, or "Impatience;" but it was taken entirely too slow; there was no *Ungeduld* in it, but it was given in the most patient and deliberate manner; besides, the song lay below her best register; yet it lacked not a certain peculiar magic of her voice and manner. We are sure such talent cannot be too carefully cherished and educated.

[With pleasure we give place to the following. Dance music is *not* beneath notice, so long as there must and will be dancing.]

The Germania Serenade Band.

MR. EDITOR:—Very many of your city readers have attended, last summer, the Afternoon Concerts of the Serenade Band, and are familiar with the high character of their performances in the Concert room. As you profess to chronicle the progress of music "in the Concert room, the chamber and in the street," I venture to hope that the music of the ball-room, (though not included in your prospectus), is yet not beneath your notice. What is the dance without music? And what is music unless it be good?

The writer has had the pleasure of hearing frequently the Germania Band in their capacity of cotillon band, and cannot resist the opportunity of using your columns to direct the attention of those who are interested in this department of music to the unusual excellency of their performance; as superior to that of the ordinary bands as their brass music is to that of our common street bands. Those who know, could expect nothing else from such artists as make up their number, headed by Mr. SCHNAPP; but there are many who, I doubt not, will be glad to know that the services of such excellent musicians can be obtained on ordinary social occasions. Besides their dancing music by the best composers, they have an excellent selection for parties at which such music is not required. W.

Musical Intelligence.

Local.

Go to the Music Hall to hear HANDEL'S "MESSIAH" to-night. That it will be well performed, we have abundant guaranty, in the thorough chorus drill of the MUSICAL EDUCATION SOCIETY; in the experience and

science and authority of the conductor, Mr. WEBB; in the array of solo singers, which, besides Miss WEBB and Mrs. WENTWORTH, includes the rare talent of Miss LEHMANN, and Mr. ARTHURSON, so valuable in the tenor recitatives (only may we slip in an entreaty that this gentleman this time will trust his own good taste enough to render the opening recitative in its noble simplicity, as Handel wrote it, and not yield to the conventional embellishment of other singers); and finally in the orchestra, which consists of the *élite* of the Fund Society as recently re-organized. Remember, too, that whoever gets a ticket, gets with it a *secured seat*.

OTTO DRESEL's Second Soirée will take place on Friday, Jan. 7th. Particulars hereafter.

HANDEL AND HAYDN SOCIETY. "Judas Maccabæus" again to-morrow evening. It needs no words to ensure a crowded audience. Only twice more can it be given. After which we hear pretty confident intimations that MME. SONTAG comes to sing with them again the *Stabat Mater*. We wonder if that proved the most profitable of her concerts! After that, the Society will commence the study of Beethoven's "Mt. of Olives."

MR. FRY'S LECTURES ON MUSIC. Our readers will understand that these lectures cannot be given until the expenses shall be secured by *twelve hundred* subscribers to the course. Subscription books with prospectus will be open at the Music Stores next week. We learn that the "Musical Education Society" have volunteered their services to Mr. Fry for the choral illustrations.

FOR GERMANY.... Our young townsman, Mr. GEORGE W. PRATT, who has acquired good musical repute by his tact and efficiency as teacher in the Normal School at Newton, in the Musical Conventions, and as conductor of the choir at Park-St., sailed by Wednesday's steamer, to pursue his musical studies in Germany. He will probably stop a few weeks in England, and then make for Leipsic, where he will find our townsmen, C. C. PERKINS, deep in the study of Bach's fugues, and J. C. D. PARKER, earnestly following up the course at the Conservatoire. Success go with him! And with the many young Americans who are now seeking musical culture in Germany. Besides the above-named, there are in Frankfort at this time two other young Bostonians on this worthy errand: Mr. WILLIAM MASON, recently announced for a concert there, and Mr. LEVI P. HOMER. Nor have we mentioned all.

FOR ITALY.... Our well-known teacher of singing, Mr. SALOMONSKI, leaves this week for a three years' residence in the Land of Song, with the view of superintending there the vocal education of a promising young pupil whom he takes with him. Mr. S. is a Polish refugee of good family and culture; his father was killed in the revolution of 1830; his sister resides as exiles in Paris. Having armed himself with the passport of American citizenship, he is now free to enter Italy, where it had been his wish to go before.

Of our two young townsmen, studying in Florence, MILLARD and SUMNER, we hear most flattering and reliable accounts of progress. The tenor of the former is the admiration of Florence. They have been there eleven months. Sumner devotes himself in earnest to the development of his rich baritone, which has "gained perceptibly in power, flexibility and style," nor has the "voice lost any of its freshness." He has already learned the operas of *Nabucco*, *Ernani*, *Beatrice di Tenda*, *Marino Faliero*, and *Lucrezia Borgia*, besides "quantities of cavatinas from other operas." A pretty fair year's work!

MUSICAL FUND SOCIETY.... We learn that Mr. FRIES has resigned the conductorship, and that Mr. SUCK has been elected to supply his place.

MR. L. H. SOUTHARD has been appointed music teacher to the new City Normal School. An excellent selection.

New York.

OPERA is now the word. Three Opera troupes! ALBONI opens at the Broadway, on Monday, in *Cenerentola*, with Sangiovanni, Rovero, Coletti, Pelegrini, &c. This is to be followed by *Semiramide*, *Norma*, *Fille du Regiment*, &c.... SONTAG opens on the 10th of January, at Niblo's, in *La Fille du Regiment*. ... MARZTEK has returned from Mexico, with Steffanone, Bertucca, Salvi, and the rest.

On Saturday (Christmas) Evening, Dec. 25, 1852.

Handel's "Messiah."

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M^{RS} CAROLINE LEHMANN

has volunteered for this occasion: and likewise, in addition to her highly prized aid, the Recitatives and Arias will be sustained by

MISS MARY ISABELLA WEBB,
M^{RS} EMMA A. WENTWORTH,
MR. A. ARTHURSON, and
MR. JONATHAN C. WOODMAN.

Conductor, GEORGE J. WEBB.
Organist, F. F. MÜLLER.

N. B. All seats will be sold by numbers, and no ticket will be issued except for a seat designated upon its accompanying check.

Tickets at 50 cents, with secured seats, will be for sale at No. 4 Amory Hall, on and after the 21st inst.

Handel and Haydn Society.

SECOND CONCERT OF THE SERIES.

HANDEL'S GRAND ORATORIO OF JUDAS MACCABEUS,

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AT THE
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ASSISTED BY

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Organist and Pianist, Mr. F. F. MÜLLER.

Doors open at 6; Concert to commence at 7 o'clock. Packages of Tickets for the Series of Six Concerts, at Two Dollars, or single tickets at 50 cents, may be obtained at the Music Stores, of the Secretary at 136 Washington Street, at the door on the evening of performance, and at the Tremont and Revere Houses on Sunday.

In consequence of other productions, this Oratorio can only be repeated on the evenings of Dec. 26th and Jan. 21. This notice is deemed proper in answer to the suggestions of parties from the neighboring cities and towns, who have expressed wishes to attend its performance.

J. L. FAIRBANKS, SECRETARY.

EXTRACTS from the "Rules and Regulations of the BOSTON MUSIC HALL."

1. No seat of any kind will be allowed in any one of the aisles or passages of the Hall, under any circumstances whatever.
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6. The Superintendent will be in his office (entrance from Winter street) to receive applications for the use of the Hall and Lecture room, every day, (Sunday's excepted) from 3 to 6 P. M.
7. Persons hereafter hiring the Boston Music Hall, for the purpose of giving Concerts or other entertainments, shall be required to dispose of the seats by their numbers, unless, on special application to the Committee of Directors, this regulation shall be dispensed with.

H11

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